

Walking Trails of Vietnam



TRIP OVERVIEW

Wander through terraced rice paddies and palm-clad hills as you follow northern Vietnam's scenic rural walking trails, visiting remote village settlements, Pu Luong Nature Reserve and spectacular Ninh Binh.

ITINERARY & DETAILS

This document aims to give you all the information that you require for a smooth and comfortable trip to Vietnam. Please take the time to read this dossier to familiarise yourself with all the aspects of our tour. It includes important information such as visa requirements and travel insurance.

Your included meal guide:

B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

DAY 1: UK to Hanoi

Depart the UK on your scheduled, overnight flight to Hanoi.

DAY 2: Hanoi B/L/D

On arrival in Hanoi, you will be met and transferred to your hotel. After lunch, a walking tour of this vibrant city begins at the Ho Chi Minh Complex where the father of modern day Vietnam declared the nation's independence in 1945. Visit sites including the Presidential Palace built by French colonialists in the early 20th century, Ho Chi Minh's House of Stilts and the One Pillar Pagoda. Explore the courtyards and pavilions of the Confucian Temple of Literature then return to the lively Old Quarter to explore this bustling commercial centre on a cyclo, a three-wheel bicycle taxi. In the evening, experience the Vietnamese arts at the thousand-year-old Water Puppet Show.

DAY 3: Hanoi to Mai Chau B/L/D

(Average 2 - 2.5 hours of walking including breaks: Today's leisurely walk of approximately 6-8 kilometres follows gravel tracks & paths used by the locals.) After breakfast, take a scenic drive through the Vietnamese countryside to the rural city of Mai Chau, passing rice paddies and sugar cane fields. Enjoy lunch in a traditional Thai stilt house then begin your walk to Pom Coong village where you'll have the chance to explore the village. Follow gravel tracks and small paths used by the locals and soak in the verdant, rugged mountain scenery as you observe daily village life. In the afternoon, check into your lodge and enjoy dinner later this evening.

DAY 4: Mai Chau B/L/D

(Average 4 hours of walking including breaks: Today's walks of approximately 14 kilometres include 3 hours of walking before lunch and another 1 hour after lunch. The walk will be along country roads at a leisurely pace) Follow flat, local roads on today's walk to Xo Village, passing tropical rainforests and rippling corn fields as you journey through the Mai Chau Valley. Gain fascinating insight into local life as you encounter villagers herding buffalo, tilling the fields and logging. Arrive in Xo Village for lunch then continue on for another hour, taking in incredible scenery and lush greenery before arriving at your end point where your bus will carry you back to Mai Chau. Arrive in Mai Chau in the early afternoon, with the rest of the day at leisure.

DAY 5: Mai Chau to Don Village B/L/D

(Average 1.5 hours of walking including breaks: Today's walk of approximately 3 kilometres takes place along the banks of the Cham River) Following breakfast, you will be transferred to Pu Luong Nature Reserve via a breath-taking mountain pass which offers panoramic views of the valley. Pu Luong, meaning 'highest peak of the village', is an area of outstanding beauty boasting palm-clad hills, terraced rice paddies and small, sleepy settlements. On arrival at your retreat nestled in the middle

of the reserve, check in and enjoy lunch and free time for you to enjoy your tranquil setting. In the afternoon, travel by bus to a suspension bridge over the Cham River, where you begin your walk in search of the mighty water wheels dotted along the river's length. Get an up-close look at the handmade bamboo water wheels and discover how water is moved from the river to these skilfully crafted aqueducts. Continue on to a local fisherman's house and board a river raft for a guided trip along the Cham River. Sail at a leisurely pace down the river before arriving at the Tan Lap Bridge, where towering trees rise from the river to form a tunnel of greenery. Transfer back to your hotel for dinner.

DAY 6: Don Village B/L/D

(Average 4.5 hours of walking including breaks: Today's walk of approximately 10 kilometres involves a gentle descent into the valley along small paths then continues along roads and farmlands)

This morning, descend into the beautiful valley facing the retreat. Walk past cascading rice terraces and along small paths shrouded in vegetation as a picturesque village reveals itself at the base of a towering mountain. Continue to the base of the valley, weaving between roads, farmland, wild fields and ponds until you reach a scenic spot where you'll enjoy a picnic lunch. After your meal, enjoy some free time to explore the village and observe local daily life and customs. Journey onward to your pick-up point for your transfer back to the retreat.

DAY 7: Don Village B/L/D

(Average 4 hours of walking including breaks: Today's walk of approximately 11.5 kilometres begins in the morning with a 5.5 kilometre walk towards Kho Muong Village and continues after lunch with a 6 kilometre walk to Dong Dieng village) Transfer to Bang Village, the starting point of your walk to Kho Muong Village. Set out on your walk, reaching an excellent vantage point which provides magnificent views. Carry onward into the village which surrounded by a huge mountain range and visit a local family to learn more about their lifestyle and culture. After a picnic lunch and a stroll around the village, visit the nearby bat cave where you'll have the chance to explore its depths and encounter its resident bats if you choose (proper shoes and torch are required). Journey onward through a picturesque natural reserve as you head to Dong Dieng village where you will be picked up and transfer back to your hotel.

DAY 8: Don Village to Ninh Binh B/L/D

After breakfast, a coach carries you to the province of Ninh Binh, home to some of Vietnam's most impressive limestone scenery. En route, stop to take photographs of local villages and spectacular rural landscapes before lunch at a local restaurant and check-in at your hotel. This afternoon, board a traditional 'sampan' wooden boat and glide through the water, admiring the enormous limestone karsts jutting out from the green rice fields on the water's edge, giving rise to the area's other name - 'Halong on Land'. The rest of the afternoon is at leisure for you to explore the area around your hotel or relax before tonight's farewell dinner marks the end of your Vietnamese adventure.

DAY 9/10: Ninh Binh to the UK B

Enjoy breakfast followed by a day at leisure before you transfer to the airport in the evening for your return flight to the UK, or continue on to your extension.

ACCOMMODATION DETAILS & MAP

Accommodation

Your accommodation is selected for convenience, location, comfort or character, and can range from business hotels to Guest houses. Hotel accommodation is generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note there is no international classification system for hotels, and differences in facilities and quality do exist between the UK and Vietnam. All group tours hotels have private bathroom facilities and air-conditioning, where needed. Please note that rooms at Pu Luong Retreat are not air-conditioned.

Rest assured that all accommodation used by Mercury Holidays is regularly inspected by our staff and partners to ensure that standards meet your needs.

If you have booked a triple share please note that your room will be a twin room with a rollaway bed or sofa bed added. This may limit the floor space in the room.

Final confirmation of your accommodation will be sent in a document, along with your final flight information, approximately 10 days before you travel.

Meals

Breakfast is always western style and served in the hotel each morning. Lunch and dinner will be taken in local Vietnamese restaurants or at your accommodation. A variety of restaurants are visited giving you the chance to experience a range of dishes and flavours.



ON YOUR ARRIVAL

On your arrival in Hanoi you will be met by a representative from our local agent, **Lac Viet (LV) Travel**, holding a sign displaying: "Mercury Holidays". The Mercury Holidays/Lac Viet (LV) Travel Representative will show you to your transfer vehicle. Your guide will be able to answer any queries. However, if you need to contact Lac Viet (LV) Travel during your stay the details are:

Lac Viet Travel (LV) Head Office, Hanoi

Floor 18, VTC Online Building,
 No 18 Tam Trinh Str,
 Hai Ba Trung District,
 Hanoi, Vietnam
 Telephone: 0084 2439 413 748

Emergency contact information

Please find below the emergency contact details for Lac Viet (LV) :
 Anna Hanh Office: 0084 983 096032
 Mr Lee Office: 0084 24 39 413 750
 Mobile: 0084 989 200 116

ABOUT YOUR WALKING HOLIDAY

Physical Accessibility and the Walking Environment

During this walking holiday, walks will average 2-3 hours daily. Walks will be along varied, flat, level terrain, with some inclines and will range from village trails through the countryside to rainforest walks. This holiday requires a reasonable level of fitness. If you are in any doubt as to the tours suitability, please speak to your GP as soon as possible as this is a physical holiday.

Climate

There are distinct summer and winter seasons in North Vietnam, Hanoi and surrounding areas. The cool but mostly dry winter lasts from November to April when temperatures are around 17 to 22 degrees with the coldest months being January through to March. Summer is from May until October and it can be hot and humid with high rainfall. July to September are often the wettest months. A light rain jacket or small umbrella are recommended year-round.

Currency Exchange

The currency in Vietnam is the Vietnamese Dong, known as VND. You can exchange your currency in Vietnam, however US Dollars are widely accepted in Vietnam should you wish to keep an alternative currency on you. We recommend that you exchange your currency before you leave the UK. It is important that you budget carefully and ensure you have the right form of currency before you arrive in the country. Cash machines will also be available throughout the tour in order to withdraw money in your local currency.

Personal Expenses

You will need to take some extra money with you to cover any personal purchases, such as souvenirs, laundry and extra drinks and snacks. Approximately £200 - £300 per person will be sufficient for the duration of the tour.

Tipping

It is at your customary to tip both your driver and guide. We would recommend to tip approximately 9 USD per person per day. This is a total of approx. 67 USD per person to budget for tips on your trip. Tips will be collected at the beginning of your tour.

Group Size

The minimum number of travellers in your group will be 8, and the maximum will be 18. In the unlikely event there are less than 8 people booked on your tour date, we will endeavour to reduce any disruption to your holiday and try to operate your tour with lower passenger numbers. If we are not able to operate your departure date then you may be asked to change to a different date and a full refund will be made available to you should this alternative not be suitable.

Itinerary Changes

The order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions or for operational purposes. Your local guide will inform you of any schedule changes as they are informed of them. Some road construction and/or weather conditions may lengthen the driving/ walking times. Our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions.

Tour Guides

This is a fully escorted tour meaning that you will be met by a local guide in each of the cities that you visit, ensuring that you have first-hand knowledge at all times.

Private Tour

If you have booked a private tour then you will be accompanied by a Driver Guide or a Driver and Local Guides. These will be available to you during all scheduled sightseeing. Private Tours can depart on any day of the week depending on flight and train schedules and the opening days of the attractions. They will follow the itinerary as described in the brochure unless you have been advised otherwise and you will still have all of the same meals, sightseeing and local excursions included.

Public Holidays – Vietnam

If you are travelling within the below Vietnamese Public Holidays please note that celebrations can last a couple of days and during these times some businesses will be closed and coach, air and train travel may be affected. Tourist attractions will be open but may be crowded. Tet Holiday is between 22nd-23rd January 2023 & 10th-12th February 2024, International Labour Day is on 1st May every year, Reunification Day is on 30th April every year and National Independence Day is on 2nd September every year.

WHAT YOU NEED FOR YOUR TOUR

Visas

A visa is not required for stays up to 15 days. For stays longer than 15 days, a visa is required for entry into Vietnam. You can apply for an e-visa online at <https://evisa.xuatnhapcanh.gov.vn>. The cost of the visa is approximately USD\$25 and will take roughly 3 working days. Alternatively, we work closely with The Travel Visa Company who will be able to arrange your visa for you on your behalf. Please call them on 01270 250 590 and quote "Mercury Holidays". The cost of the visa is £105. The visas take around 10 working days to issue and are only valid for 3 months from the date of entry. We therefore recommend that you apply for your visa 8 weeks before travel, however please be aware that your passport will be required for the application so make sure that you will not need it during this time. You can also visit the Embassy of Vietnam in London: 12-14 Victoria Road, London, W8 5RD. This visa information is a guide line only and is subject to change; up-to-date information regarding the process and fees will be advised at the time of calling the Travel Visa Company.

Insurance

We strongly recommend that you and all members of your party are suitably insured as soon as you book your holiday. It is a condition of

booking that you must have suitable travel insurance. It is important that you purchase travel insurance that suitably covers your participation in whatever activities you may undertake at the time that you make your booking. To assist you with this, we have arranged travel insurance in partnership with Holiday Extras. To arrange your travel insurance with Holiday Extras, please call **0800 781 4237** and quote 'WK830' for preferential rates. Please ensure you provide us with the name of your insurer, policy number and their 24 hour emergency contact number as soon as possible. Sunspot Tours will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance from the date of booking.

Health and Vaccinations

It is your responsibility to check any health & vaccination requirements applicable to your booked arrangements. We can only provide general information about this. Health and hygiene facilities and disease risks vary from country to country. You should take health advice about your own needs as early as possible and in sufficient time before your departure. Sources of information include: www.fco.gov.uk, www.travelhealthpro.org.uk, www.hpa.org.uk, your GP or a specialist clinic.

WHAT TO PACK

- Sunscreen, insect repellent and hat
- Personal first aid kit containing travel pills, rehydration powder, plasters, stomach settlers, antiseptic creams, aspirin, blister plasters etc
- Camera and charger
- An electric plug converter - the electricity in Vietnam is 220-240 V. You will need a 2-round pin plug or 2 flat pin plug adapter
- Loo paper for public WCs
- Binoculars

- Sunglasses
- Water Bottle
- Anti-bacterial hand wash
- Daysack/rucksack to use during walks: It is recommended you take a daysack for your walking tours to keep a few belongings with you on your walks; waterproofs, fleece, sunhat, sunscreen, insect repellent, water bottle and the all-important camera!

CLOTHING

- Lightweight breathable clothing, such as loose cotton which is ideal for the generally warm and humid conditions in Vietnam
- Sun hat
- Warm clothing - A thick fleece or sweater is necessary as nights can be cold (December to February)
- Waterproof lightweight jacket

- High quality hiking socks
- Walking boots – we recommend you bring boots with ankle support that are worn-in and comfortable before you start your walking holiday. Alternatively, you may wish to bring comfortable trail shoes
- Bathing suits

FLIGHT INFORMATION

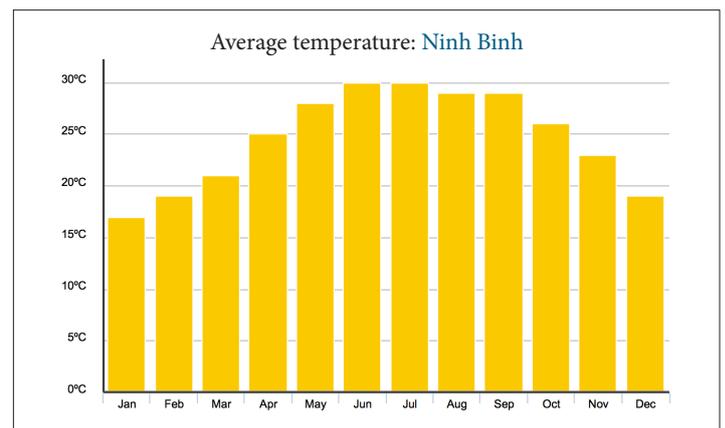
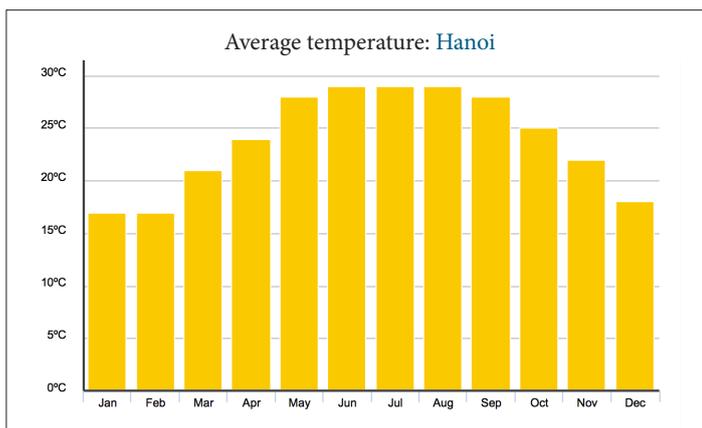
IMPORTANT: Please note that final flight details, including terminal, airline and baggage allowance, will be confirmed on your final documentation which will be sent to you approximately 10 days before departure. A printed E-ticket is no longer required at check-in, all you need to do is present your passport to the staff at the desk and your boarding pass will be given to you.

Airport Extras

If you wish to arrange Airport car parking or accommodation at preferential rates, we recommend you book this in advance with Holiday Extras on 0871 360 2000, quoting HX313.

WEATHER AND CLIMATE

Weather can vary quite considerably throughout the year, so please familiarise yourself with the climate charts below.



Hoi An Beach Stay Extension

If you have not yet booked this fabulous extension, there is still time to do so. Please contact 0333 003 0522



Little Beach Boutique Hotel

TRIP OVERVIEW

Five days, four nights in Hoi An is the perfect way to complete your tour. Relax and unwind by the turquoise ocean waters, sample local cuisine and explore the historic Old Town.

ITINERARY & DETAILS

This document aims to give you all the information which you will require during your beach extension to Hoi An.

Your included meal guide:

B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

A former port town, Hoi An is a historic town with narrow streets, riverside cafes and a stunning nearby beach. The traditional Old Town is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site with numerous pedestrianised streets. The Hoi An beach sits close to the town, enjoying palm fringed shores and powder white sands.

DAY 9: Hanoi to Hoi An B

Depart Hanoi on your scheduled flight to Da Nang for your transfer to Hoi An and your first night.

DAYS 10 - 12: Hoi An B

At leisure at your choice of hotel.

DAY 13: Hoi An to London B

After your transfer to Da Nang depart on your scheduled flight to London.

Tour Guides

Your stay in Hoi An is not escorted by a tour guide.

Hotels

Hoi An (4 nights)

Depending on your preference your Hoi An stay will take place at one of the following hotels:

4★ Le Belhamy Hoi An Resort and Spa on Bed & Breakfast.

or

5★ Palm Garden Hoi An Resort on Bed & Breakfast.

Your hotel will have been confirmed at booking.

Hotel Information

4★ Le Belhamy Hoi An Resort and Spa

Address: Biển Hà My, Quảng Nam, Vietnam

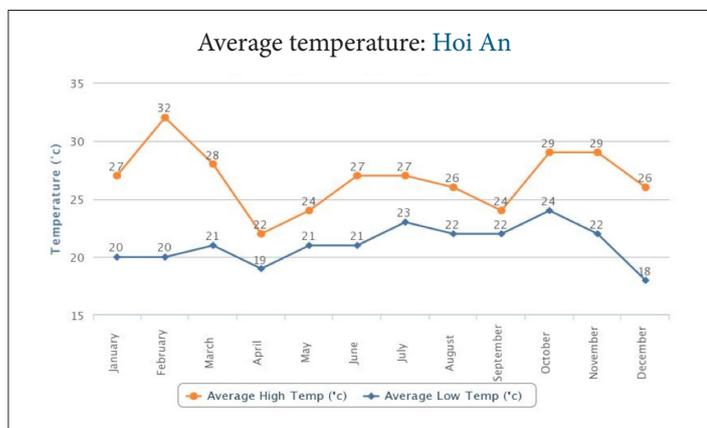
Tel: 0084 235 3941 888

5★ Palm Garden Hoi An Resort

Address: Lac Long Quân, Hoi An, Quang Nam Province 560000, Vietnam

Tel: 0084 235 392 7927

WEATHER AND CLIMATE



Palm Garden Hoi An Resort

FLIGHT INFORMATION

Please note: Final hotel and flight details will be confirmed on your final documentation which will be sent to you approximately 10 days before departure.

Hanoi and Halong Bay Extension

If you have not yet booked this fabulous extension, there is still time to do so. Please contact 0333 003 0522



TRIP OVERVIEW

Combine the famous sites of Hanoi such as the Ho Chi Minh Complex and One Pillar Pagoda with an overnight luxury cruise on the awe-inspiring Halong Bay, passing local towns and fascinating intricate limestone formations.

ITINERARY & DETAILS

This document aims to give you all the information that you require for your extension to Hanoi and Halong Bay.

Your included meal guide:

B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner,

DAY 9: Ninh Binh to Halong Bay B/L/D

This morning, you will be transferred to Halong Bay, one of Vietnam's most impressive scenic sights. Heading out of the town, board your boat and embark on a four-hour cruise amongst over 3,000 limestone islands rising from the clear, emerald water. The limestone karst formations are peppered between beaches, grottoes and beautiful caves. Anchor in the bay for your overnight stay and dinner on board.

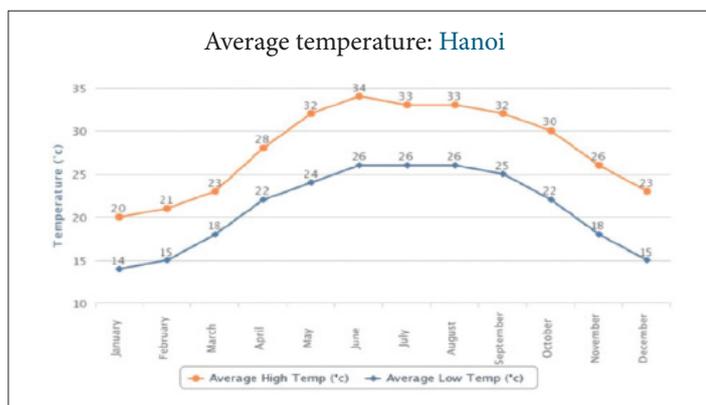
DAY 10: Halong Bay to Hanoi B/L/D

Enjoy a morning in the middle of the bay as the sun rises over Ha Long and breakfast or brunch is served while the vessel cruises slowly back towards the port. Transfer back to Hanoi for dinner and your overnight stay.

DAY 11: Hanoi to the UK B

Enjoy a day at leisure in Hanoi, allowing you to take in the historic and cultural sights of the city. In the evening, transfer to the airport for your return flight to the UK.

WEATHER AND CLIMATE



Hotel information

Halong Bay* (1 night): 2020: Paloma Cruise Boat, 2021: Ancora Cruise Boat

Hanoi* (1 night): 4★ Muong Thanh Hotel

Address: No 78 Tho Nhuom, Hoan Kiem, Hanoi, Vietnam.
 Contact number: 0084 243 942 7777

Any alternative hotels or boats will have been confirmed at booking. Please speak to our reservations department if you are unsure.

Please note: the hotels and boats listed are provided for guidance only and final confirmation of your accommodation will be sent in a document, along with your final flight information, approximately 10 days before you travel.

Personal Expenses

You will need to take money with you to cover personal purchases such as laundry service and souvenirs plus money for any drinks and snacks that are not included during your stay.

Tour Guides

This is a fully escorted tour extension, meaning that you will be met on arrival by your guide who will remain with you for the duration of your trip ensuring that you have first-hand knowledge at all times.

Please note

This extension takes place after your main tour.



Muong Thanh Hotel

FLIGHT INFORMATION

Please note: Final hotel and flight details will be confirmed on your final documentation which will be sent to you approximately 10 days before departure.